



(Photo by Spc. L.B. Edgar 7th MPAD)

## Hooray!

Lt. Col. John Luttrell, battalion commander of 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry Brigade Combat Kentucky National Guard, 130th Field Artillery Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, meets with a class of Iraqi students in the Al Rasul Primary Elementary School in the Makasib village, west of Baghdad, April 17. (See story page 4)

## Aviation battalion marks one-year anniversary

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert  
1st ACB Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Most one-year-olds can barely walk, but the 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade has come a long way in its infancy.

The 3-227th "Spearhead" Battalion observed its one-year anniversary April 16. Although the unit's history goes back to the early 1960s, it stood up as part of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade a year ago at Fort Hood, Texas.

The battalion certainly had its share of growing pains in the early months, as

Command Sgt. Maj. Chris Amagliani, the battalion's top noncommissioned officer, recounted in remarks at the anniversary observance. The battalion began with about 24 Soldiers - including Amagliani, who was the first Soldier in the new unit - had 10 aircraft assigned with most of those in reset and had three toolboxes for the Soldiers to share. They moved into World War II era buildings that had no furniture.

"Those are just a few examples of what this battalion had to deal with in the early beginnings," said Amagliani, who calls Fort Hood, Texas, home, during his remarks. "The glass is no longer half empty. As for all of our Soldiers, they had

only one question on their mind. How are we going to be able to support two (training) rotations with the other battalions and then do our own battalion rotation and deploy to Iraq in less than seven months from activation?"

The Soldiers had the answer to that question within a few short months.

"We accomplished this with the mentality of being able to do more with less," he said. "We had to establish priorities of training that were way out of the box. There were times when just about every-

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# Spearhead troops have lots to celebrate

## Aviation

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body wanted to say uncle, except for Uncle Sam. However, our Soldiers returned to the driving concept for which I think this battalion is well known - that concept of learning. I believe that this is a winning organization and that it will continue to be long after I'm gone."

The battalion's commander, Lt. Col. Michael Shenk, Carlisle, Pa., admitted he had his doubts about the unit being able to stand up from scratch and deploy to Iraq within six months.

"My heart fills with pride as I look back to those days," Shenk said. "My only regret is not having complete and total confidence in our ability to achieve rightness, deploy in support of the Air Cav. Brigade and 1st Cav. Division in a record six months, and execute our currently assigned mission with such precision and care.

"I'm a believer now. Our glass is quite surely half full."

With the second half of the battalion's first year spent in the skies of Iraq, the Soldiers already have become old friends - and seasoned veterans.

"I'm extremely proud to be a member



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert 1st ACB Public Affairs)

**Lieutenant Col. Michael Shenk, commander of 3rd Bn., 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, who hails from Carlisle, Pa., speaks to his Soldiers and guests at the battalion's one-year anniversary observance.**

of a team that assumed those challenges of activating and deploying to combat," Shenk said to his Soldiers and guests gathered at the anniversary observance. "The individual and collective accomplishments




of this battalion to date are beyond comprehension.

"You've flown over 10,200 combat flight hours. You've moved over 55,000 passengers; transported over 270,000 pounds of cargo; accomplished 1,700 air mission requests; safely transported the leaders of a sovereign nation, both former and current; pumped nearly 600,000 gallons of fuel; and executed 43 air assaults. You've reenlisted your most deserving Soldiers above established goals, you've maintained your assigned equipment above known standards, and you've complied with the known guidance and my commander's intent."

Amagliani said the battalion's Soldiers still possess the mentality that got them through the battalion's difficult beginning.

"Just look at yourselves now, knowing you are all here in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom defending this great nation of ours - never dropping a mission, doing whatever task is asked of you and then some," Amagliani said. "I will always hold a special place in my heart for the Soldiers in the organization for which I serve. There is no other place that I'd rather be than serving right here with you for this great nation of ours."



Iraq 3-Day Weather Report			
	Today	Tomorrow	Thursday
High: 86 Low: 59	High: 90 Low: 66	High: 91 Low: 66	

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## Baghdad in Brief

### Troops assist neighborhood with fire damage

BAGHDAD- An armored vehicle caught fire while on patrol in the Ameriya neighborhood of the Iraqi capital, damaging a nearby structure April 22.

A combat patrol from 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, was returning from a reconnaissance mission in Ameriya when a fuel leak caused a fire in a Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

The fire quickly engulfed the entire vehicle and spread to a nearby building.

The building was abandoned and posed no danger to the general public. Emergency services were immediately notified and the Ameriya Fire Department responded to the scene.

The crew of the armored vehicle suffered no injuries and assisted in cordoning off the area and handed out claims cards for the resulting damage to the neighborhood.

This incident is under investigation.



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Strain 1st Cav. Public Affairs)

**Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Spiva, the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade's senior non-commissioned officer, addresses questions from family members during a brigade Town Hall meeting April 17 at Fort Hood's Phantom Warrior Center. Spiva was home on leave from the brigade's deployment to Iraq.**

## Air Cav hosts Town Hall

**By Sgt. Robert Strain  
1st Cav. Public Affairs**

FORT HOOD, Texas - Families and Soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Air Cavalry Brigade (Rear) held a Town Hall meeting April 17 at Fort Hood's Phantom Warrior Center to discuss pressing issues and upcoming events in the brigade and division.

Town Hall is an opportunity for families and rear detachment Soldiers to ask questions about the deployment, discuss any issues they maybe having and get the latest information from the unit's leadership.

"It's important that our families know they can get info that is correct," said Maj. Shane Curtis, the brigade's rear detachment commander, who explained that there are a lot of rumors going around that just aren't true.

While normally a member of the unit's leadership is on screen via satellite during the Town Hall, Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Spiva, the brigade's senior noncommissioned offi-

cer, stopped in while home on leave to answer any questions about morale and life in Iraq for the aviation brigade Soldiers.

"The morale is actually pretty good," Spiva said. "These guys are working harder, faster and safer than [any previous unit]."

The number one issue on the minds of many of the families is the recent deployment extension announced by the Defense Department and how it may affect their Soldiers in Iraq.

According to Curtis, it is still unknown which units, if any, within the brigade will be affected by the extension, but he assured families that the 15-day environmental morale leave and the support from rear detachments and family readiness groups will continue throughout the entire deployment.

All First Team families are encouraged to attend the 1st Cavalry Division Town Hall at 6:30 p.m. April 25 at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center where Maj. Gen. Joseph Fil Jr., is scheduled to address issues and answer questions via satellite.

### MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION BAGHDAD

Observes

### DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

"VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST"



22-24 April 2007

9:00 am - 7:00 pm Daily

Camp Liberty Stable



POC: MND-B EO OFFICE @ VOIP: 242-4133/DSN: 847-2345

# Kentucky Guardsmen make a difference to school children

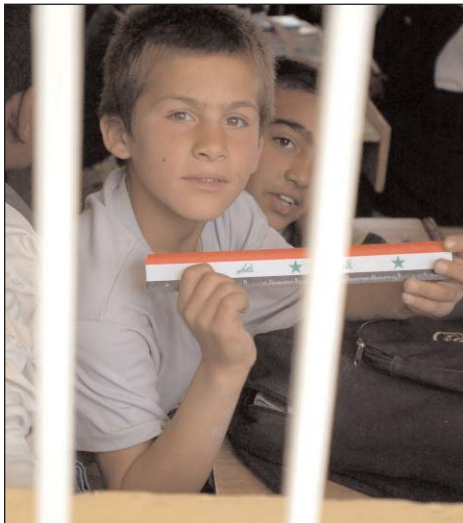
By Spc. L.B. Edgar,  
7th MPAD

MAKASIB, Iraq - A warm welcome met the Soldiers upon their arrival. Smiles have replaced once contemptuous stares. The typical silence gave way to a friendly dialogue. A customary hand to the heart followed every handshake. The Soldiers were greeted, not as outsiders of the community, but the heroes of the now joyous school.

The day was special for the students of the Al Rasul Primary Elementary School here, a town west of Baghdad, April 17. This was the first day students enjoyed the fully refurbished learning facility made possible by the Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry Brigade Combat Team of the Kentucky Army National Guard, assigned to 130th Field Artillery Bde., 1st Cavalry Division.

However, the day was just as special for the Soldiers as for the students, said Lt. Col. John Luttrell, the battalion commander,

"You could see the smiles on their faces. For my Soldiers that really means a lot for them. They truly get to see the fruits of their labors," said the native of Harlan,



(Photos by Spc. L.B. Edgar 7th MP AD)

**A student of the Al Rasul Primary Elementary School in the Makasib village, displays a ruler during a visit by Soldiers of 1st Bn., 149th Inf. BCT Kentucky National Guard, 130th FA Bde., 1st Cav. Div., April 17.**

Ky.

The Soldiers of the battalion are Army National Guardsmen from Kentucky who bring a plethora of professional experience, which aids in civil military operations and humanitarian assistance missions, as well as simple social interaction with the populace, said Maj. Chris Cline, the battalion civil military affairs operations officer.

"One of the things that Kentucky boys are good at is talking. That one-on-one relationship with the local Iraqis (is) critical because you gain trust (with one another)" said the native of Hodgenville, Ky. "Our Soldiers are really good about interacting with the students. Our Soldiers are good role models. They saw a genuine concern and care for the students."

The school project included the addition of classrooms, the remodeling of existing structures, a complete coat of fresh paint and the erection of living quarters for the groundskeeper, Luttrell said.

The school is just a small piece in the bigger puzzle. Ensuring stability for Makasib is the objective for the Soldiers because their mission is force protection of Camp Slayer, which neighbors the town. Securing Makasib creates a blocking position to deter insurgent activity near the Baghdad International Airport, Cline said.

Formerly one of Saddam Hussein's favorite towns prior to the fall of Baghdad, the strategic Makasib was neutral, dirty, and dreary until Soldiers slowly started to make a difference in the community, Cline said.

Working with the Makasib Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC), the first step was to clear the streets of sewerage and garbage, which brought vendors back to the market street to resume commerce. Next the locally appointed NAC decided to improve education, which led to the school project. Now the NAC is turning its attention to bringing continuous power to the people. By next month every home in Makasib will have 20 amps of power, he said.

Since Soldiers engaged the populace, employment is up, the economy is vibrant and the streets are cleaner. By establishing a relationship, Soldiers have encouraged



**Lt. Col. John Luttrell, battalion commander of 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry Brigade Combat Kentucky National Guard, 130th Field Artillery Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, carries supplies into the Al Rasul Primary Elementary School in the Makasib village, west of Baghdad, April 17.**

the emergence of local governance, Cline said.

Now Soldiers do not have to seek out intelligence, so much as process it.

"If they have information, they will come forward and give that to you because they appreciate the good things that are happening to their town," Luttrell said. "They will help you police up their own area."

The importance of local cooperation is increasingly important since the start of Operation Fardh Al Qanoon, commonly referred to as the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP). As coalition forces crackdown on violence in Baghdad's capital, insurgents are increasingly regrouping in less populated areas, Luttrell said.

Luttrell is hopeful his Soldiers' success in Makasib will spread to Baghdad. He said Makasib is just one building block in the reconstruction of Iraq and his Soldiers are just trying to leave it better than they found it.

"If nothing else, those Soldiers made a difference for that community," Luttrell said of Makasib. "We can only fix our little piece of the puzzle."



# New Soldier sees reality of war

**By Staff Sgt. Antonieta Rico  
5th MPAD**

BAQUBAH, Iraq -- Sweat mixed with dirt on the face of Pvt. Eric Rundquist. Slowly, it made glistening streaks down his face as he rode within the dusty confines of a Bradley fighting vehicle, March 28.

A muffled thud briefly shook the 40-ton personnel carrier, and those inside checked on each other. The Bradley had just hit a roadside bomb - another combat experience for Rundquist, as he rode away from the scene of his first firefight in Iraq.

His experience may have been similar to the media's portrayal of a Soldier's life in Iraq, but not identical. With little more than two weeks spent in Baqubah, Rundquist said he has learned that there's more to his job than combat.

"As a little kid, watching war movies, I was like, 'I want to be a Soldier,'" Rundquist said, "My uncle was a Soldier.

He pretty much glorified it all for me."

The 22-year-old Rundquist has been in the Army for nine months. He acknowledged the rush of adrenaline he felt during the firefight, but he can't ignore the satisfaction he'd experienced when performing other duties, such as handing out food to the residents of Baqubah.

"It's not always action," he said of his duties to this point.

Rundquist now realizes he had a false impression about the Army and its presence in Iraq, which was shared by family and friends in his hometown of Streamwood, Ill. Their perceptions, he said, were influenced by what they'd seen on the news.

"You only hear about the bad stuff. You never hear about the good things," Rundquist said. "I mean, we are doing good things out here."

Rundquist, a member of Company B, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd

Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, said he didn't know about the humanitarian aspect of being a Soldier until he arrived in Iraq.

"You think every time you go out there, its going to be a firefight," he said.

But his first mission in Baqubah was handing out shoes and food to civilians. He said his interaction with the Iraqi people helped him let go of misconceptions about the country's people, as well.

"There are good people out here," said Rundquist, "They are just trying to live their life. They just happen to be caught in the middle of a war."

In his first few weeks in Baqubah, Rundquist has faced the intensity of war. Minutes before the Bradley hit the roadside bomb, Rundquist and his fellow Soldiers had finished a sporadic engagement with insurgent snipers that lasted about two hours.

But Rundquist has also talked with Iraqi children. A feeling of compassion for the Iraqi people now dominates his attitude.

"People actually have to live around that stuff 24 hours a day, and people will and are getting killed," he said. "I would somehow like to help. They deserve it - a normal life away from all this war."

Before he joined the Army, Rundquist worked and spent time with his friends like most people his age. He said his experiences in Baqubah make him feel like he is living a small part of history.

Sometimes he thinks, "Look what you were, now look what you are ... look where you have gone. Now, you are in Iraq, halfway around the world, in a street in Baqubah, in a firefight."

He will remember when he returns home that war is not like what it's portrayed as on the news, he said.

Until then, he is determined to keep his mind here in Iraq, and as the new kid in his squad, he's determined to be an asset to his team.

"I'm going to keep my morale high, because I do not want to let anybody down," he said.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Antonieta Rico 5th MPAD)

**Pvt. Eric Rundquist, left, and Pvt. Jason Taylor, both with 1st Platoon, Company B, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, hold on to a strap inside a Bradley fighting vehicle after the Bradley hit a roadside bomb.**